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*THE FOUNDATION OF A NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL SOCIETY.*

DURING the last twenty-five years anthropology has made great advances in our country. Before the year 1877 attempts had been made here and there to collect information in regard to our native tribes. The report of 1822 on the Indians, by Jedidiah Morse, the monumental work by Schoolcraft, and the many important investigations connected with the geographical and geological surveys of the Western States, are witnesses of an early interest in the history of our native tribes and of their remains. The first attempt to organize ethnological work was the establishment of the Bureau of American Ethnology through the activity of Major Powell. It took a long time, even after the organization of the Bureau, before the necessity for careful training of anthropologists became clearly understood; and it was only in 1888 that, through the appointment of F. W. Putnam as professor, anthropology was introduced in Harvard University as a subject of instruction. Since that time great strides have been made, and the list of anthropological courses given in colleges and universities, which was recently published by Mr. MacCurdy,\* is an encouraging sign of the growth of interest in our science.

The increasing interest in anthropology also led to the formation of a number of societies specially devoted to this subject. The first anthropological society founded in America was the American Ethnological Society of New York, established in 1842 by Albert Gallatin. This society, in course of time, became dormant. Meanwhile, in 1882, the American Association for the Advancement of Science recognized the claims of anthropology by founding an anthropological section. In 1879 an Anthropological Society was established in Washington. In 1895 the New York

Academy of Sciences established a section of anthropology and psychology; and in 1899 the American Ethnological Society in New York was resuscitated. It seems but right to mention in connection with these societies the American Folk-Lore Society, which was established in 1888, and which has done much valuable anthropological work. Besides this, a number of smaller informal societies might be mentioned, such as the Anthropological Club at Harvard University.

At the present time we find, therefore, three important societies devoting themselves to the advancement of anthropology. These are the Anthropological Section (H) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Anthropological Society of Washington, and the American Ethnological Society. The first of these is national in its character; the other two are essentially local societies, although both have a number of members scattered all over the country.

The rapid advances of anthropological work in America make it desirable to consider whether the development of anthropological societies cannot be so directed as to lead to a thorough organization that will be beneficial to the further development of anthropology.

The objects of scientific societies may perhaps be briefly defined as follows: First, to give opportunity for the discussion of scientific problems among students, and thus to further the advancement of science; secondly, to disseminate knowledge through the publication of the results of investigations; thirdly, to create new interests by bringing the progress of scientific research to the attention of the lay public. This last point, while not immediately contributing to the advancement of science, must be considered as of fundamental importance, particularly in our country, because no science can flourish that has not the

\* SCIENCE, February 7, 1902.

support of public opinion. It is therefore incumbent upon scientists to sustain societies which spread their activities as widely as possible.

The constituencies of national and of local societies are naturally different, the national society taking its members from all over the country, while local societies are primarily confined to the inhabitants of a certain city, or, at most, of a limited district. For this reason the means applied by local and by national societies to extend their membership cannot always be the same.

A difficult problem often arises among those societies which are most successful in popularizing the subject matter of their science, because the lay members largely outnumber the scientific contributors. Wherever this is the case there is a tendency towards lowering the scientific value of discussion, because, out of regard for the general public, purely technical matter is often excluded from the discussions. Thus the necessity arises of giving opportunity for technical discussions, in order to enable the society to fulfill its purely scientific mission, namely, to serve the advancement of science by means of discussions among scientists, and by the publication of technical papers. The greater the public interest in a science, and the less technical knowledge it appears to require, the greater is the danger that meetings may assume the character of popular lectures. Anthropology is one of the sciences in which this danger is ever imminent, and in which for this reason great care must be taken to protect the purely scientific interests.

It seems to my mind that the problem of how to effect the best organization of anthropologists cannot be solved without a discussion of the general organization of scientific societies. The problems with which we are confronted in various

branches of science are practically the same, and the general tendencies that manifest themselves should be considered in guiding our actions.

At the present time our active societies may be classed as follows: First, we have a group of miscellaneous societies, such as our local academies, in which all sciences are represented with a large lay membership; secondly, there are local special societies with unlimited membership, such as our geographical, anthropological and zoological societies; thirdly, the American Association for the Advancement of Science represents a class by itself, similar in character to the local academies, but intended to embrace the whole country. There are a number of somewhat special societies of a similar character, which, however, are more or less devoted to applied science. All these societies cater to a very great extent to the lay public. As a reaction to the popularizing tendencies of these societies, and intended to fill the demand for an opportunity for technical discussion, a number of purely scientific national societies and the American Society of Naturalists have arisen. The formation of the National Academy is also partly due to this demand.

It has evidently been found impossible to harmonize the popular and technical elements in the meeting of the general societies, else it would be difficult to understand why the national purely scientific societies should have arisen, notwithstanding the existence of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The fact that so many societies of this character have sprung up recently shows clearly that it is necessary to provide for purely scientific meetings.

A consideration of the methods of publication of our societies brings out a number of points of considerable interest. We find that throughout the country it is the

practice of every society which publishes accounts of its work, to endeavor to build up a library by exchanging its publications with those of societies treating allied subjects. The wider the scope of the society, the more ambitious the scheme of the library. It seems to my mind that this method of procedure is not in accord with existing conditions. The administrative machinery of a society is not adapted to manage an efficient library. The available funds are, on the whole, too slender to admit of adequate binding and shelving of the books, not to mention the impossibility of having the library accessible at all times to every one who needs it. I do not believe that a single city could be found in which a publishing society exists that has not a public library in which books are properly cared for, and which would not supply all the demands immeasurably better than a scientific society could do. I do not need to bring forward specific examples of the complete break-down of society libraries, because cases are too numerous. It is only in technical or semi-technical societies, which possess buildings of their own, and which to a certain extent partake of the character of clubs, and whose fees are accordingly high, that attempts at managing a library have been at all successful.

If it were once recognized that the efforts of societies to build up libraries are necessarily futile, and should be left to organizations established for the care of books, the whole question of publication and distribution of publications would assume a new aspect. As it is now, most of our societies accumulate libraries where they are neither needed nor wanted, and furthermore they distribute their publications among people to whom they are an encumbrance. It should be clearly understood that among the members of our societies there are a great many who join,

not on account of any specific interest in the subject of the society, but simply because they consider it proper to advance the interests of science. Most of these would much rather not receive the publications of our societies than be so encumbered. It is only recently that one or the other society has adopted the method of requiring its members to express their wish to receive the publications of the society before sending them.

If the effort to build up a library, and the miscellaneous distribution of publications were discontinued, a very considerable saving in the funds of each society could be effected, and the available funds for publication would be materially increased.

If once the accumulation of books were left entirely to existing libraries, scientific societies of good standing would have a right to expect that each library would subscribe to their publications; and in this manner it would be feasible to establish publication on at least a partially paying basis. We should not forget, however, that many of our societies are not strong enough to publish journals which are so important that every great library would subscribe for them. It seems to my mind that here, more than anywhere else, is an opportunity to make our work effective by better organization. The anthropologists of this country found it advantageous to combine in regard to publication. The Anthropological Society of Washington has published for a long series of years, under heavy sacrifices, the *American Anthropologist*. In 1899 the Society gave up the journal, and allowed it to become a national journal. It has increased in size, and it is now supported as their official journal by the Washington Anthropological Society and by the American Ethnological Society. If we imagine that such concentration were to take place in other societies also, many of

the smaller journals might be combined, and might become of such importance that libraries would have to subscribe to them. It is perhaps too much to hope for a realization of such a plan in the near future, because it might seem to encroach too much upon the individuality of each society.

There is however one case in which the advantage of a proceeding of this sort seems so obvious that I wish to mention it.

Our local academies of science were organized at a time when men of scientific interest were few and far between, and when it was necessary for all of them to come together and to work together. The publications which have developed from these sources are miscellaneous in character. An astronomical paper may be followed by one on geology, which in turn may be followed by one on anthropology, botany, or even philology. For this reason the papers published in such miscellaneous collections are hardly noticed, and, if noticed at all, are quickly forgotten. The publications of our local academies are an excellent medium for burying good work. It would seem that, if our academies could disregard the sentimental interest in the continuance of their series of publications, and could give their support to existing special journals, or if several academies would combine in such a manner as to make it feasible to publish series relating to various sciences, the effectiveness of the scientific work accomplished would be immensely increased, and I venture to say that in this manner much of our scientific publication could be made nearly self-supporting.

In order to bring this about, cooperation between the various academies would be necessary. In fact, the local academy would assume a function entirely different from what it is at the present time. It would become what the Washington Academy of Sciences was intended to be, and

what the Scientific Alliance of New York is trying to be—a clearing-house between the various local societies. Evidently a development of this kind would lead to the establishment of a number of national societies, each with its local branches of greater or less independence; and the local branches, representing various sciences, together would form a local academy. It would seem that in this manner the national as well as the local interests of each science might be fully guarded.

I believe that to a certain extent our societies are developing in this direction. The establishment of the national, purely scientific societies to which I alluded before, and their relation to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, are in line with a movement of this kind. If the general interests in any science were concentrated in one national society, it might be considered advantageous for such a society either to take the place of, or to affiliate itself closely with, the corresponding section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and for the Association to assume the same function in relation to all the national societies that the local academy assumes in relation to the local societies. These ideas were well outlined by Professor Cattell in the annual discussion before the American Society of Naturalists at their meeting in Chicago, 1901.

Anthropology is in one respect better situated than most of the older sciences, because, comparatively speaking, little has been done. The interests that will arise during the coming twenty years are certainly immeasurably greater than the interests which have become organized during the past twenty years. It might therefore seem feasible to direct, to a certain extent, the growth of our societies in lines that may seem desirable. Up to the present time the Anthropological Section of the

American Association for the Advancement of Science has performed the functions of a national society. During the last few years the Section has assembled every winter at the same time and place as the American Naturalists, and has tried to hold a meeting which was intended to be more strictly technical than the summer meeting. These meetings have decidedly grown in interest and in importance.

Recently the question has been raised whether Section H is the most efficient medium of bringing together all those scattered individuals who take an interest in anthropological matters. I thoroughly believe that this can be done.

It should be borne in mind that the effort to bring together from all over the country those interested in the advancement of any special branch of science has an intimate relation to the more general objects of creating an organization in which the whole interest in science centers. This is the function of the American Association for the Advancement of Science; and if this aim is borne in mind, the Association is bound to become a factor of great importance in molding the development of scientific interests in our country. It seems to my mind that the general scientific interests would suffer if any new popular scientific societies were created that are not affiliated as intimately as possible with the American Association for the Advancement of Science. If we endeavor to obtain, from all over the country, lay members for an anthropological society, we should endeavor at the same time to make them members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. It might perhaps seem that the necessity of contributing the amount of the membership fee for each member of a special society to the American Association would not be in the interest of the special society, but I am inclined to believe that this would be a

narrow point of view to take. The large increase in membership of the American Association which could be effected by bringing the members of all special societies into the Association could not fail to give such a tremendous impulse to the Association, and to make it so much more powerful, that it would retroact upon the single societies, and that it would facilitate their growth.

It seems to my mind that this point of view should determine our further actions in regard to the organization of anthropological interests. I should advocate a movement originating in the American Association for the Advancement of Science, by which the Section of Anthropology should be authorized to take the name of a national anthropological society, and to levy assessments for their own particular purposes, and by which only such members of the American Association should become members of the Section as fulfill the requirements set by a special council selected by the Section. This would lead to a distinction between members at large and members united in special societies—a process which I believe would be wholesome for the advancement of the best interests of science.

It seems to me that we should not be misled under present conditions by the mere desire to obtain as rapidly as possible as much financial aid to anthropology as we can secure, but should in all our movements be controlled by what seems to be for the best permanent scientific interests of the country.

The reasons for our desire to bring together all those who are interested in anthropology are twofold. The work of a national society will be beneficial to them by stimulating their interest and bringing them into contact with their co-workers all over the country. On the other hand, every new member will help the society

to enlarge its activity in establishing anthropology on a firmer basis. Although, therefore, the establishment of close relations between all individuals all over the country who are interested in anthropology seems to be of great importance, the reserving of an opportunity for discussion among scientists alone must not be lost sight of. At the present time the number of trained anthropologists is so small that it is doubtful if there is any immediate necessity of providing for such meetings. A conservative estimate of the number of anthropologists who can lay claim to a fairly symmetrical training, and who contribute to the advance of anthropology, would hardly exceed thirty. At the same time the number of young men who devote themselves to this science is constantly increasing. Harvard, Columbia and Chicago universities are constantly training new men, and the breadth and thoroughness of their training are constantly increasing. If therefore the time is not ripe for providing for strictly technical meetings, it is certainly not far distant. In most sciences the organizations which are providing for technical meetings, and those which provide for the general interest of the science, have become distinct organizations. I have hinted before at the reason which led to this condition of affairs. The foundation of societies of specialists was partly a reaction against the popular character of the meetings of the older societies. The experiences of the last few years seem to suggest that a separate organization gives a better assurance of preserving the purely scientific character of meetings than attempts to distinguish between two kinds of meetings of the same society—technical meetings and popular meetings—or through the division of the membership of a society into two classes, as fellows and members. Nevertheless it is not certain that adequate provisions for technical meetings might not

be made in the general society. I wish to call attention here to the methods of scientific societies abroad, many of which have also a miscellaneous membership. The scientific work of these societies is carried on successfully, notwithstanding the presence of lay members, and the success of such meetings depends simply upon the courage of the presiding officer, and of the speaker to discuss before his audience technical matters which may be beyond the comprehension of a majority of the audience. I do not venture to say whether an attempt of this kind could be successful here.

I believe the reasons that have been adduced, and which have been much discussed among a number of anthropologists, are weighty enough to induce us to consider carefully if the time has come for a better organization of anthropological work all over the country, and what steps may be the most advantageous to take.

FRANZ BOAS.

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*EXCERPTS FROM THE REPORT OF THE CENSUS COMMITTEE OF THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY.*

THE Census Committee of the American Chemical Society sought to learn as accurately as possible the progress during the last twenty-five years, and how to better the conditions for the development of chemistry in America. A mere statement of the conditions without further comment would hardly secure that end. It was therefore necessary to gather statistics of the most varied character. Naturally such a report could not be complete, as the members of the committee had various other cares demanding their attention, and the means at their command were limited. Sufficient data, however, were secured to give cause for some gratification and at the same time to indicate directions for much home mission work among American chemists. This